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NEWS

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WEST LAFAYETTE WASTEWATER TREATMENT RENOVATION TO SAVE ENERGY, COSTS AND GENERATE REVENUES

West Lafayette, Ind. – July 5, 2006 – A $9.4 million investment, to be paid over a 20-year time period, by the City of West Lafayette is expected to reap nearly that same amount in energy and cost savings as well as new revenues in the same 20 years, reports mayor Jan Mills.

The city is upgrading its digesters at its wastewater treatment utility at 500 S. River Road and installing a grease receiving station. The new digesters will help the city save energy and costs and also be able to generate energy. The fee-based grease station will process waste grease from food processors and restaurants, providing a revenue stream.

"We are in the early stages of a project to modify and renovate the digesters at the plant so they can produce electricity and hot water for heat," Mills said. Digesters are the final step in treating processed waste to ready it for land application as a fertilizer, she explained.
"Our first step in realizing this energy conservation and costs savings is the design of the system, and we're getting assistance with that from M.D. Wessler & Associates," Mills said. Based in Indianapolis, Wessler operates a local office in partnership with California-based Kennedy Jenks.

"With this project, we expect to realize a dramatic improvement in efficiency and to greatly reduce our utilization of energy resources," Mills said. "These are important steps, given today's energy challenges and costs."

Mark Moore, chief operator of the city's wastewater treatment utility, explained that the existing digesters will be upgraded and generators that burn methane gas will be added. "Those generators will produce the electricity and hot water heat. This updated digester equipment will also be used in grease processing to produce more methane gas for the co-generation system, resulting in more electricity and hot water being generated."

The city is also automating the handling system that delivers biosolids to the digesters. "This will make the process more efficient and curb energy use," Moore said.

A new standby generator also will be installed to provide power to the utility in cases of outages, to fulfill requirements by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

The $9.4 million project is being funded by a 20-year state revolving fund loan. Engineers for the city have estimated that it will realize a $9 million positive financial impact from the project over the next 20 years.

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